



Sam Brownback

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Brownback Hosts *Touched by An Angel* Season Premier Screening on Capitol Hill

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback tonight hosted a Capitol Hill pre-view screening of the CBS television show *Touched by An Angel*, which addresses slavery in the Sudan. He was joined at the screening of this season's premier by Roma Downey (Monica) and Martha Williamson (Executive Producer). This year's season premier will air Sunday, September 26 on CBS.

"Over the past couple years, I have engaged Hollywood in a spirited dialogue regarding programming responsibilities and its impact upon our society," Brownback said. "This show, *Touched by An Angel*, is a perfect example of the positive influence that Hollywood can have, not only upon our culture, but even for people in a far-away country -- the Sudan.

"This June, I traveled to Sudan on a fact-finding mission with Congressmen Donald Payne and Tom Tancredo who are with us this evening. On that trip, we personally witnessed the extraordinary suffering of the Sudanese people.

"The Sudanese people are victims of extreme human rights abuses during the course of this civil war. Where else in the world has a people been subjected, simultaneously, to all of these crimes against humanity, including genocide (2 million dead), continuous civilian bombing (resulting in 4.5 million refugees), government-manufactured famine (100,000 died last year), forced religious conversions, and slavery, the subject of this show? Nowhere else. And yet this suffering continues unabated.

"Have no doubt about it -- slavery exists in the Sudan, in the 20th Century, as we sit here tonight. I am very grateful to Martha Williamson and CBS for exposing these human rights abuses in such a personal way. It is an extraordinary show with an extraordinary purpose -- that of exposing this insidious darkness called 'slavery'.

"I would like to make one last observation tonight. The Sudanese people admonish me on one point: They were adamant that their suffering not be viewed *only* through the lens of slavery. It is my hope, that among the 20 million people who will watch this show on Sunday, many will be activated to support our efforts to end this war and stop the atrocities. Ultimately we hope this represents another step towards peace and justice for a people who have given everything," Brownback said.

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The *Touched by An Angel* episode portrays a fictional senator who is confronted with the existence of slavery in the Sudan. Sudanese who were formerly slaves appear in the program.

Sen. Brownback has been a leader in rallying Congressional involvement to end human rights violations including genocide, slavery, civilian bombing and government-manufactured famine against the Southern Sudanese. Williamson, who wrote the episode, spoke with Brownback to gain insight, including what life is like as a senator and details on the issue of slavery in the Sudan. Brownback, who was present for part of the episode's filming, led a Congressional delegation to the Sudan in June of this year. The trip inspired both legislation on the issue and his assistance to Williamson.

Brownback is an original cosponsor of the Sudan Peace Act (S. 1453). Earlier this year, the Senate passed legislation authored by Brownback, giving humanitarian aid to the Southern Sudanese, as a part of S. 1234, the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill. In July, the Senate passed a resolution sponsored by Sen. Brownback, condemning the National Islamic Front government for its support of terrorism and its continued human rights violations.

Brownback is a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and sits on the African Affairs Subcommittee. He is also a commissioner on the Helsinki Commission (the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe).

Touched by an Angel recently finished its 5th season ranking consistently in the Nielsen top ten. The family drama has received numerous awards, including its recent induction into the Museum of Television and Radio.

Co-hosting tonight's event were: U.S. Sens. Sam Brownback, Jesse Helms, and Joseph Lieberman; House Majority Leader Dick Armey; U.S. Reps. Tom Lantos, Edward Markey, Donald M. Payne, Tom Tancredo, and J.C. Watts, Jr.